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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN'S COMMENT ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

¶1. Summary: Taiwan dailies (October 3) focused on the Taipei District Prosecutor's Office decision to close the Sogo Department Store Ownership case on Monday without indicting First Lady Wu Shu-chen. Taiwan dailies also focused on the casualties suffered by mainland Chinese tourists when their bus plunged off a mountain road into a vineyard in Central Taiwan on Monday night.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed article in the pro-status quo "China Times" said the United States, in order to preserve its national interests, will not let President Chen Shui-bian unilaterally change the status quo. An opinion piece in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said remarks by the U.S. State Department toward President Chen have left no leeway and are akin to humiliation. The editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said that pushing for constitutional reform is an old trick for President Chen to attract fundamentalists and added that a defeat in the Kaohsiung mayoral election in 2006 will certainly be a blow to President Chen and the DPP. End summary.

### ¶3. U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

"A-Bian's New Constitution Incident in the Eyes of the United States"

Chen I-shin, professor of Graduate Institute of American Studies at Tamkang University, opined in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (10/03) that:

"Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs, Thomas Christensen, held a closed-door meeting in late September in Washington D.C. Participants in the meeting included officials of the State Department's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and AIT Director Stephen Young, who returned to D.C. on September 22 to attend a meeting with U.S. ambassadors posted in East Asia. According to media reports, there were two sides in the meeting: one side advocated ignoring Chen Shui-bian's plan to push for a new Constitution; and the other, hawkish side proposed to quash it. The result was that the hawkish side got the upper hand. In fact, from the Bush Administration's recent appointments of new personnel to implement its China policy and active U.S.-China relations, we can see that the United States will definitely not allow Taiwan to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait unilaterally. ...

"... What makes people curious is [AIT Director] Stephen Young's position in this debate. Although he is not optimistic about the red-clad Anti-Bian Action, yet from my perspective he can only have a personal preference. As a U.S. official, he must act according to the U.S. national interests and may not have his own position. No matter how Stephen Young looks at President Chen Shui-bian's new

Constitution incident, he is looking at the question from the perspective of U.S. interests."

#### 14. President Chen Shui-bian's Comment on Constitutional Reform

##### A) "Four Worries ... the United States Has Left no Leeway"

Loh I-cheng, a retired diplomat wrote in an op-ed article in the pro-Unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (10/03) that:

"... U.S. Department of State Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey's remarks on September 25 only consist of a few short sentences, and they seem to have nothing new in them when one first hears them. Actually, very serious warnings are hidden inside the diplomatic language. I really consider it the most serious U.S. remarks toward Taiwan over the past six years. In addition to reiterations such as "the United States does not support independence for Taiwan" and "the United States continues to be opposed to unilateral changes in the status quo by either side," there are four new worries about A-Bian's personal capabilities.

"What are these worries? The original text in English is : 'the fulfillment of President Chen's commitments is a test of his leadership as well as his ability to protect Taiwan's interests, its relations with others and to maintain peace and stability in the Straits.'

"... In the past, even during [the holding of a] referendum and disputes about abolishing the National Unification Council, the United States has never questioned A-Bian so harshly. Casey's conclusion is simple: the United States will remember A-Bian's 'repeated promises' and 'expect him to carry them out.' There is no leeway to bargain.

"Spokesman Sean McCormack condensed Casey's remarks as 'President Chen's fulfillment of his commitments will be a test of leadership, dependability and statesmanship.' To 'test' the leadership of

another country's head in diplomatic remarks is equal to saying that his/her leadership is not that trustworthy. It has left no leeway, almost to the extent of humiliation."

##### B) "Chen vs. His Party, People"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/03):

"... The U.S., Taiwan's mentor and protector, has openly put Chen to a 'test' of his 'leadership, dependability and statesmanship' to fulfill his repeated commitments not to unilaterally change the status quo.

"At rallies marking the DPP's birthday, Chen ,defying warnings from both Washington and Beijing against any move to change the island's Constitution and alter its territorial definitions, reiterated his 'impossible missions' to push for a new charter as well as U.N. membership under the name of 'Taiwan.'

"Chen's China-provoking rhetoric was an obvious attempt to please fundamentalist pro-independence voters, who account for only 20 percent of the population.

"The DPP has no major achievements to speak of and no other cards to play except the old trick of raising tensions in the Taiwan Strait. It has to rely on its core pro-independence voters for support in the December mayoral polls for Taipei and Kaohsiung. A defeat in the southern stronghold would deal a crushing blow to both Chen and the ruling party. ..."

WANG